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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Hopi Council: Hopi Code Talkers deserve gold medals, not silver for federal recognition**

*"The Hopi Tribe and the Council are thankful for the federal recognition, but are disappointed that 'silver' medals are being considered instead of 'gold' medals." – Eugene Talas, director of Hopi Veterans Affairs*

**KYKOTSMOVI, Ariz.** – It took nearly 63 years for the Hopi Code Talkers to be recognized by the federal government as significant contributors to ending World War II, but it has been a struggle to identify Hopi Code Talkers who served during that time because many opted to remain humble about their time served in war—a discussion that is often discouraged in Hopi culture.

In 2008, the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 110-420, known as the Code Talkers Recognition Act of 2008. The purpose of the Act requires the issuance of medals by the U.S. Congress to officially acknowledge the service of Native American Code Talkers to the United States and to acknowledge that code talkers deserve immediate recognition for their dedication and valor for service that is long overdue.

According to the Act, Native American Code Talkers shall be eligible to be awarded a silver duplicate medal, instead of gold, in recognition of their service in the Armed Forces as a Code Talker in any foreign conflict the U.S. was involved in during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Each respective tribe of the Code Talker shall also be awarded a gold medal with its tribal emblem.

Eugene Talas, director of Hopi Veterans Affairs, is committed to ensuring all Hopi Code Talkers get recognized at the federal level with a gold medal, instead of silver.

On Oct. 25, Talas updated the Hopi Tribal Council on efforts to formally recognize and honor the Hopi Code Talkers and all Native American Code Talkers who served in World War I and II – excluding the Navajo Code Talkers who have already been federally-recognized.

Talas said the Hopi Tribe and the Council are thankful for the federal recognition, but are disappointed that "silver" medals are being considered instead of "gold" medals. As a result, the Hopi Tribal Council oppose language in the Act that mentions "silver" medals and they said the Code Talkers' service to the United States warrants a gold medal, which Navajo Code Talkers already received.

On Dec. 19, 2008, the Hopi Tribal Council passed Resolution No. H-004-2008, advocating for Hopi Code Talkers and their families to not agree and accept the recommended medal provisions of one gold medal for each tribe and a silver medal for each Code Talker or surviving family member.

As a result, the Hopi Tribal Council reaffirmed their position in accordance with their 2008 resolution that each Code Talker receive nothing less than a gold medal.

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Momentum is building and more attention is being brought to this issue.

Talas mentioned that he met with Jack Jackson Jr., a candidate for the Arizona Senate, about possibly sponsoring state legislation to formally recognize the contributions of the Hopi Code Talkers in American history.

Talas also updated the Council on the added names to the registrar of Hopi Code Talkers. Rex Pooyouma from the Village of Hotevilla, who passed on recently, was the last surviving of 10 federally-recognized Hopi Code Talkers. Pooyouma was added to the official listing by the U.S. Defense Department recently.

Through additional in-depth research and investigation, Orville Wadsworth has also been identified as another Code Talker. His name has been submitted to the Department of Defense for validation.

Maxine Wadsworth, daughter of Code Talker Orville Wadsworth, appreciates the recognition of her late father.

"It was during the interview with Rex Pooyouma regarding his service in the military that I found out about my father's service as a Hopi Code Talker," Wadsworth said. "Rex spoke highly of my father and the intense moments they shared out in the battlefield. I cried driving home after the interview, because it explained a lot about my father. I have always been proud of my father's service in the military, especially knowing that he was among a brave group of men that went off to war with slightly more than the reliance of our native language to participate in a battle so far away from home. I appreciate the recognition that is being bestowed upon him and his service to our people and our country – As quali (thank you)"

In the meantime, Talas continues his work on behalf of Hopi Code Talkers and will be working to get gold medals -- instead of silver medals -- awarded to surviving family members of Hopi Code Talkers.

For more information, contact the Office of Hopi Veterans Affairs at 928-737-1834.

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